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"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

THE CHIMERA

EDITORS

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH FEARON BROWN FREDERICK MORGAN
DAVID NEWTON BARBARA HOWES

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The Pedagogue of Sensibility

THREE LETTERS OF HENRY ADAMS

by R. P. Blackmur

IN THAT department of education which develops the sensibility rather than the skills, we may say that the goodness of a teacher is in the quality he imparts to his pupils' power of response and reaction and relation; and that goodness—that quality—may well be most clearly felt wholly apart from the utility of the lesson, even from its truth, just in the teacher's own expression of that power. The teacher wakens to his own lesson; as we say, he realises it, meaning we see him wake up intently to what it is; and if we learn anything it is precisely by absorbing that quality of wakefulness. In the matter of sensibility, the achievement of quality is the mastery of method; the rest is rhetoric, regimen, persuasion—all both ancillary and secondary to the prime charm of wakefulness.

The experience is common in art. Henry James spent his life in displaying special charmed cases in his novels; there is nothing that we feel so much in the career of an Isabelle Archer or a Lambert Strether as the momentary access in ourselves—as a felt quality—of just that explicit and permanent wakening of sensibility which James' characters so expensively achieved. James adds to our sensibility without injuring our sentiments; which it may be is the moral value of his art. Henry Adams is like a character in James, he had his long wakening, through an endless varying crisis, and at almost intolerable expense of action and the suffering of action, to a sensibility capable, within its

special scope, of an unexampled degree of response. In the apprehension of that sensibility—in the absorption of just his quality of wakefulness—lies the moral value of Adams' life. Fortunately, as James meant to make the value of his characters plain, so Adams, too, felt deeply his function as practicing artist, and attempted, over and over, at every level of experience and friendship, to make his own values lucidly representative. He was pretty consciously always a teacher in the midst of every lesson he learned. In him the pedagogic instinct struck nothing but the beautiful incentive (James' phrase for the artist's urge) in every access of sensibility; he could not help trying to pass it on whenever he saw room for the passage; and the attempt, like the incentive, usually took the form of art: the form of objective imaginative expression, of which the test was the quality of vitality involved and never the mere factual report. The two forms of expression—pedagogy and art—merged in Adams; as they have merged avowedly in all the late work of Thomas Mann—in the Magic Mountain and the Joseph novels; merged, for both men, they kept the ball rolling. *Donner la Replique!* That great principle of social conversation, with which Adams inculcated his nieces and nephews again and again, was no less the fundamental operative principle in both more intimate and more objective relations. To respond to that which has been answered, to answer the answer—even if only to smile at the smile of the Sphinx—that is the function of the artist as teacher, the teacher as artist, of the sensibility at work *and* play. Work *and* play; if the ball of sensibility was to be kept rolling, the two elements were as necessary in combination as, in the moral field where it rolled, was the double knowledge of good *and* evil.

How the ball rolled we know best where we can feel it most purely as the sheer idiom of imagination, in the Education and the Chartres, to our sense of which, with every renewal, with every fresh witness of interest, wherever otherwise gained, we must always be driven back, our knowledge, strengthened or modified, thereby confirmed. That is our object: to confirm, at the end of every excursion into the personal, the wayward, the

incomplete; to certify, just by re-compressing what we have expanded, our feeling of the unity of Adams in the objective imagination of his great works. That is our object all the more appropriately because we may say that it was also, more than half avowed, Adams' own object in life whenever his sense of life was deep. It is the fate, the character, of imaginative men that their lives fall gradually into the patterns of their works and are finally lost there. The sole excuse of critical exegesis and biography is that by those means we sometimes ourselves best pursue the patterns into the works.

To return, then, so fortified, to the actual pursuit of Henry Adams in his capacity as practicing pedagogical artist of the sensibility, let us here take up as good evidence certain letters, momories, and scenes: constituent intimations of the imagination we are finally to come at. So far as it *is* good evidence it will, with a little pushing, count itself for all it is worth: our pushing is only to help the material fall into the pattern that awaits it.

In January of 1898, Adams went with the Hays to Egypt—Hay taking his sixty days annual leave from the Embassy in London. Together they visited Cairo and Memphis and thence journeyed up the Nile to Assouam in a steam-dahabieh; thus following much the same route Adams and his wife took on their marriage journey in 1873. Steam instead of sail and oar made the difference. "Indeed," he wrote Elizabeth Cameron on February third,[1] "the sudden return to the boat came near knocking me off my perch. I knew it would be a risky thing, but it came so suddenly that before I could catch myself, I was unconsciously wringing my hands and the tears rolled down in the old way, and I had to get off by myself for a few minutes to prevent Helen [Hay], who was with me, from thinking me more mad than usual. She could hardly know what it meant, in any case, and it would not have been worth while to tell her. A few hours wore off the nervous effect, and now I can stand anything, although of course there is hardly a moment when some memory of twenty five years ago is not brought to my mind. The Nile does

not change." On the 28th of February they were back in Cairo at Shepheard's hotel. "After dinner,"[2] he wrote Mrs. Cameron, "talk in the thronged hall and cold plunges into the hottest of water. Then I heard what I have tried to put off so long, a little of the story of the *Maine*,—as much as can be learned here—and, from step to step, was dragged back to the life I fled. I fled once more, and as soon as my cigar was out, I escaped unmarked in the crowd, and hid myself in bed."

He fled alone—for the Hays had to return to England—storm-swept, to Beirut and Jaffa, Damascus and Smyrna; but his escape was dubious. On the 28th of March[3] he wrote from Smyrna to express his sympathy to Sir Robert Cunliffe over the death of the latter's wife. "It is heartrending to sit, year after year, and think of life past, interests lost, and pleasures extinct. The effort for distraction becomes ferocious and careless of consequences." Writing to Gaskell two days later, having just visited Ephesus, he remarked,[4] "I do not know that I have ever felt a more acute sense of remoteness and desolation than today in the absolute wilderness that was formerly the centre of art and life in the world." And he added, a little further on, "Nothing surprises me so much as the power of destruction in our race. They seem to have made as much effort to destroy, as they ever made to create. London would offer them hardly a mouthful."

The observation has only intensified its aptness in forty-six years; but it is given here, together with its companions, chiefly to fix the mood—the incubating matrix for an event in sensibility—through which, in April, he responded to the double blow of Athens and Constantinople. There are printed letters to Brooks Adams (dealt with elsewhere), Gaskell and Mrs. Cameron, to which the reader may refer; they make different tangents of response from that upon which we here choose to be carried away. To his niece Louisa Hooper, then twenty four years of age, Adams wrote on the fifth and twenty sixth of April, from Athens and Constantinople, two long letters from which the following extracts are taken. The reader will notice among other things a certain ease of tone and address, a free mixture of

extreme seriousness and frivolous play, an emphasis on sense over fact, insight or bias over intellect, which are both engaging and persuasive: altogether a set of qualities not found complete in any of the other correspondences. The reasons, if reasons they are, are simple enough to name however complex to feel: they have to do with the relationship of uncle and niece, that avuncular relationship which in the last thirty two years of his life was quite the closest Adams ever had, and which he indeed felt as his alter ego. Nieces were the object of a long effort at distraction not ferocious but tender, not careless of consequence but consequence itself. *Chartres* was addressed to nieces—real and in wishes—and gives us some measure of what Adams felt the consequence might be. They saved one from silence, which Adams felt always encroaching upon him; made one's voice ring true; practically, as audience—all feminine, plastic, blithe, the living image of the one immanent primum mobile, sex—they gave one heart and cause to speak all one thought and felt as no other audience ever could. So much for reason, which, as Adams said, the mind resorts to for want of training. For the rest, there is the value of the experience itself, which the niece remembers as profound.

"Your letter, dated some time or other," the uncle began, "which reached me somewhere, is lying, I guess, in my trunk with a hundred others, and I'll not bother to get it out, merely to see whether it asks for an answer. As a moral foundation for all the serious duties of life, I've a rule of never answering. In the first place, if the question concerns me, it's nobody's business but mine. In the second, if it concerns others, I never meddle with their affairs: if they can't run their own machine, the Lord he knows that they can do it at least as well as I can run mine: and anyway no one really wants advice: all they want, or will take, is encouragement to do as they like. To you, this is cynicism and selfishness, and you must, on the contrary, meddle all you can in things that don't concern you, in order to impart to them a portion of your own virtues: but a man of eighty, like me, has no virtues, and therefore answers no questions.

"He seems to get over the ground all the same, for he arrived here punctually to the instant on April 1, and, for the first time for a month, got letters and news. . . . The idea occurred to me that, now I was once here, I might see Athens, and I even hinted as much to Dolly Rockhill. She rather seemed to acquiesce. At least, we have passed most of our time in the Acropolis, and, as far as I can see, are likely to pass the rest of it there or thereabouts, for the dust is always so thick that one's eyes are too blind to see, and the wind blows so hard that seeing anything is a nuisance. So I live chiefly in Rockhill's study, and talk about the many virtues of William McKinley as compared with Pericles. He wants me to go with him to visit a lot of Kings he has in Servia, Bulgaria, etc., and I rather approve the plan, for I hanker after no more spring weather, and am willing to let the east winds blow out before I get back to London in May. The tourist is abating, and life here becomes possible. But who knows? The mere threat of a war has already upset my journey. The reality may upset Rockhill's kings. From day to day, I have become a mere dust heap blown about by the winds, and the next blast may blow me back to Asia—or back to America. I prefer Asia, but perhaps it will end by my dawdling here.

"Yet somehow Athens suits me less well than any of my recent haunts. Charles Norton and Pallas Athene must not know it: but do what I will, I cannot get to feel that Athens was ever a serious fact. She always seems more or less a stage-scene to me, and not invariably well acted. After Egypt and Syria, the Gods and temples of Greece fit into history like a bit of Opera Comique into Wagner. It is graceful, amusing, with plenty of action—too much—and a vast superfluity of cleverness: but Pallas is not thinking of divine duties, and Praxiteles was singularly well aware of his own excellence. Not that I question it, I should sooner question the Pons Asinorum. Only, I wish I could feel that Zeus knew, as well as Praxiteles, what he was doing: or that anybody except Hermes and Aphrodite felt quite at home in a Greek mind. Beautiful as a Greek temple was, I do not understand its fitness for worship: still less, for the residence of a God. Com-

pared with an Egyptian temple, or with St. Sophia, or with the cathedral at Amiens, it seems to me all outside, and the outside all ornament and no purpose. Euripides and Aristophanes swear at each other in the very sanctuary of the Parthenon. Socrates asks impertinent questions, and Alcibiades treats it all as a joke. The incorrigible Greek habit of lying lurks in every corner, and jumps at me from every monument. It gets on my nerves here as it never does at a distance. I don't know whether to join in the fun or to put the Sophists to death. To be sure, it helps me to understand Greek history, but I did not come here to study history. To make it worse, the place is full of archeologists, and the date of a foundation is infinitely more serious than the deity that stood on it. The table d'hote reeks of poor cooking and German excavations.

"Add to this that modern Athens is pure opera bouffe, with less character than Cambridgeport. It is true that I have come here from Cairo, Damascus and Smyrna: but I think it affects everyone in the same way. It is impossible to take the place seriously. I loathe the Turk, but he is imposing compared to the Greek. One can't help being affected by the atmosphere one is in, especially as it is rather the fashion for recent writers, as Mahaffy for instance, to maintain that at bottom the Greek character has not changed.

"Still, the interest remains. After all, one is at Athens. If one were not, the place would be a desert at once. The climate is detestable. The want of water and shade is intolerable. The city has, geographically, no excuse for existing. It is a sheer intellectual tour de force; an effect of imagination; a defiance of political and other economy; and that I like, or should like, if the people were not greedy and trading beyond the standard of a second hand Jew slopshop. The Acropolis is charming—no doubt of it—and the museums are full of interesting things, mostly fragments to be sure, but good as nearly all Greek things were. The Mycenae collections seem rather modern and familiar after Egypt, and rather thin; but they are curious. When the dust subsides, the sky is blue, and the colors lovely. The indefinable

charm of association lies over the landscape. Last of all, I am lazy, glad to admire and, in spite of drawbacks, very willing to enjoy. Greek art, one sees better in London and Paris, but the setting of the art one can see only here. Occasionally I get impatient, and wonder what men find here to set beside Chartres or Michael Angelo, but it passes. . . ."

So much for Adams thinking of Athens, feeling what he thought, on April fifth, after five days in the house of William Rockhill, then American minister jointly to Greece and several of the Balkan States. The story was taken up again three weeks later in a letter dated from Constantinople April 26, 1898.

"I've a notion I got a letter from you not long ago. I've a very distinct recollection of something of the sort, but of late I've been rather busy again, and things slip my mind. While you no doubt are convulsed by excitements, I am wandering with Agamemnon or the Crusaders, and letter-writing comes unhandy among such companions. At last here I am, looking out over the Golden Horn and Sta. Sophia, with an hour to spare, which I give gratuitously to you, not knowing when I shall have another.

"I stayed three weeks or more in Greece, where, thanks to the Rockhills, I felt at home. It seemed to me that, considering all I had heard about Greece, three weeks was not too much to see of it. For varied forms of discomfort I know nothing to compare with it, except Mexico; but, like Mexico, it is certainly amusing. Athens is rather a fraud. The Museum, with its marbles and Mycenae things, is excellent; the Acropolis has a considerable charm of its own; but the wind, and dust, and glare; the heat when it is hot, and the cold when it is cold; the bareness of the hills; the barrenness of the vegetation, and the kleinstadtishness of the city, swamp Plato and Pericles, and turn Pheidias to ashes again. I prefer the deserted ruins. Eleusis was lovely. Sunium was charming. Mycenae was as fascinating as a book of the Odyssey. But Delphi pleased me most, not because of the ruins, but because of the scenery and the originality of the idea. Holy cities always make the best ruins. There is something about commerce that does not lend itself to happy ruin, but the Gods seem to en-

joy it, and Apollo does not mind sitting up on the side of a mountain alone, with no one to talk to. I should have enjoyed sitting there with him, over a sunset, but Delphi is far away, and one can only pass the ugly hours of midday there.

"We were four days, and nights that counted double, on the trip to Mycenae and Delphi. Greek inns are squealers; Greek steamers are worse; and Greek food is superhuman. Much as I have travelled, I rather think Greece comes nearest, in my experience, to the perfection of discomfort. It is a sort of cheap discomfort, too,—a dirty and ambitious imitation of discomfort, that wears rapidly on one's nerves. I don't advise you to try it. You will never forgive Pericles or Epaminondas or Demosthenes, for it. Whenever you see a Zeus or an Apollo, the memory of Greece will rise up between them and you. I am sure Dolly Rockhill can never read Oedipus without thinking of the goat's milk and butter that always made her sick. Even the Venus of Milo is safe for me only because she came from an island. One gets to think of the Greeks only as liars. One feels that Xerxes probably never wanted to conquer the place at all, and never tried to. Even Greek architecture loses something. One notices that a Greek temple, at a certain distance, looks small; it is not religious or imposing; it is like a toy. Even the Theseum, the only ruin comparatively complete now left in Greece, counts for little compared with its size. Altogether, I strongly recommend imaginative people, who love Greek art, to avoid Greece. Like the Venus, it is better in fragments and in Paris.

"Yet it is true I enjoyed it very much. It amused me uncommonly. We tumbled about, in dirt and glare, and were very jolly. The people kept us awake all night at their Easter, banging off pistols and firecrackers and brass bands and howls and yells. The various unpleasant insects fed on us. We had to get up at midnight to travel, and go without food or drink. But we were amused, even when we pigged in all together to a smelly cabin with four bunks, to sleep in our clothes for fear of animals, or get into a cart to reach quarters.

"The one thing rather good, to my surprise, was the roads;

and we ought to know, for we had to drive over many miles of them.

"I did not go to Olympia. After seeing a dozen ruined theatres and hippodromes, I got tired, and gave out. One city is phenomenally like another, and one Nike or one Hermes answers most of my purposes in travel. I am all for archaic work now. Praxiteles or Scopas or Pheidias or who ever it was that made men and women graceful, has lost my vote. Next to the Mycenae age, I go in for the early Greek, or perhaps the Phenician Greek, and my jaded appetite rejects the sweets of perfection.

"I tore Rockhill away from Athens to visit his sporadic kingdoms on the Danube, and we came here on our way. Greece is, as I said, rather a joke. Since the time of Pericles, no one has taken it quite seriously. Constantinople is another story. What it is, I do not know, but it is not a joke. I rather think it is, and always was, one of those extraordinary nuisances, not altogether uncommon in history, which exist only because man is imbecile as well as vile. It is a nightmare. Incidentally it is a lunatic asylum. Whatever it once was, it is now not even picturesque, except for its geography, and except it is lurid with massacre and fear. At the same time, it is to me excessively interesting,—more so than any other city in the world. It is the epitome of universal history: the dust-heap where the human race has forever dumped its vices and shame. It is now cheap, sordid, vulgar, unredeemed by a single virtue, and not dignified by a respectable vice. It is what it always was, only worse; the measure and monument of European failure in politics, as Rome measures its failure in thought, art, and religion. Of course, therefore, I am very much at home in it, and think it charming.

"Naturally I rushed off at once to Santa Sophia, that Pons Asinorum of tourists. Of all the buildings in Europe, the most familiar to me is Santa Sophia, and the simplest to understand. Yet I admit that it surprised me much. I had not appreciated its possibilities. Of course, it is a very inferior church as far as religion goes, and hardly compares with any little twelfth-century parish-church about St. Germain in that way; but as a theatre for

the display of Byzantine State and Church, it is the most surprising success. Just where St. Peter's fails, it covers itself with glory. I was lost in admiration at the astonishing cleverness of the men who, in the sixth century, when western civilization had perished, and eastern was in full decadence, could build a structure that knocked cold all that Rome ever did, and all that the East has ever done. And yet it is the mere shell of what it was.

"Then we went to see the Tyrian sarcophagi, the so-called tomb of Alexander. These, too, are very fine indeed—very. I suppose them to be the tombs of some of Seleucus' dynasty, perhaps of Seleucus himself; certainly of some one not far from Alexander the Great; but it matters little who it was. The whole thing is most interesting, and almost I think that I like it a little better because it is not Athenian. How on earth such a work ever got to Tyre is a question that reopens the new and startling subject of Tyrian-Greek art, which, like the Sicilian-Greek, is a field really of the future; but there I leave you to your Art Museum, which will keep you safe from such heresies, and true to Apollo."

To expound is often to arouse distrust, as to explain is often to confound; but if we may risk one emphasis here, it is this: that these letters are the product of the personal as well as the objective aspects of Adams' sensibility and show the play between the two. Nothing has been struck out, the economy of composition is nowhere brought to bear. Remembering this, let us at once compress the story back into the objective record Adams made of it in his Education seven years later.[5] "Brooks Adams had taught him that the relation between civilizations was that of trade. Henry wandered, or was storm-driven, down the coast. He tried to trace out the ancient harbor of Ephesus. He went to Athens, picked up Rockhill, and searched for the harbor of Tiryns; together they went on to Constantinople and studied the great walls of Constantine and the greater domes of Justinian. His hobby had turned into a camel, and he hoped, if he rode long enough in silence, that at last he might come on a city of thought along the great highways of exchange." A little later, when his travels had stopped and he read St. Augustine, he might

have put it that he was looking for the Civitas Dei along the trade routes of the mind, with no better luck, but had found the city of that goddess whose power was both superior and anterior to any thought or images men made of her.

Meanwhile his true hobby was not the pursuit of trade routes; that was only an occupation—a distraction; he began to see that his true hobby was the re-development, in himself, of a sensibility of which the lack had long imposed a privation upon western thought and feeling. Nor did he pursue his hobby in silence altogether, though he contented himself for a time with private expressions. He felt himself still hardly more than a tourist "even to the depths of his sub-consciousness, and it was well for him that he should be nothing else, for even the greatest of men cannot sit with dignity, 'in the close of evening, among the ruins of the Capitol,' unless they have something quite original to say about it."[6] But Adams did gradually begin to have something to say, the more original because he felt it had not been said, or understood when said, for a long time. Speaking of himself and St. Gaudens, Adams observed[7] that "each had but half a nature, and when they came together before the Virgin of Amiens they ought both to have felt in her the force that made them one; but it was not so. To Adams she became more than ever a channel of force; to St. Gaudens she remained as before a channel of taste. For a symbol of power, St. Gaudens instinctively preferred the horse," as in the monument to General Sherman. "The attitude was so American that, for at least forty years, Adams had never realised that any other could be in sound taste. How many years had he taken to admit a notion of what Michael Angelo and Rubens were driving at? He could not say; but he knew that only since 1895 had he begun to feel the Virgin or Venus as force, and not every where even so."

What Michael Angelo was driving at was not precisely the Virgin—whether at Amiens or Lourdes or Chartres or elsewhere in her many homes—it was beyond or beneath the Virgin, and was certainly inclusive of the horse; what, it is for any one to say; but what Adams felt in Michael Angelo at Florence, rightly or

wrongly—and since he felt a question it was both right and wrong—adds greatly to our ability to feel in Henry Adams the force that makes us one. What he felt was a major step in education which opened the sensibility in several directions at once.

The story has a simple stage. In the spring of 1899 Adams went down to Sicily and Italy with the Lodges; they finished their trip at Florence, turning from temples and landscapes to the tombs of the Medici. The Lodge boys, Bay and John—especially Bay, the young poet, then twenty five years old—were favourite nephews of Adams and part of his charge as pedagogue of the sensibility. If we look, for the sake of a comparison of teacher and pupil, at the extracts which Adams printed in his life of the young poet from the letters written on this journey, we see that Lodge was all sentiment and stress and preparation; alive, struggling, distraught in intellect and spirit; a worthy pupil; but he had not developed his sensibility beyond the person to the point of objective response. Looking now at the letter Adams wrote to Louisa Hooper from Florence on May 20, 1899, we see the difference in value—in education—between the beginning sensibility concerned necessarily with itself as matrix, and the matured sensibility concerned by greater necessity with achieving and responding to the objective pattern. Young Lodge wrote his fiancée: "One makes oneself so very largely, and to make oneself greater or better, one must believe. Apply your religion: 'Thy faith has made thee whole!' That's the most wonderful thing Christ ever said, and it applies everywhere in life."[8] Adams knew better, and responded directly to the imaginative energy which had both "made" him, in Lodge's sense, and of which he was at best a representative expression. With the predicament of Lodge we can sympathise, unchanged. As we participate in Adams' response we add to our stature.

"Here we are," Adams wrote, "having finished our trip, at least as far as I am concerned, for I have seen all I came to see, and linger only to be with my crowd. Although a good deal of the old light and simple crime has gone out of Italy, and I see no longer what I felt once, and feel no longer what the middle-

ages felt, I find St. Francis, or at least his church, and Michael Angelo, or at least his chapel, quite of my time. After getting done with my Greeks and Normans in Sicily, who interested me very much, I found that the only kind of brandy that could get me up an emotion was Michael. He was chief of my school of Conservative Christian Anarchists. I am altogether consoled, quieted and at times entertained by the vigor of vehemence of the old man's loathing. Not that he was much of a Christian or a Conservative! All the Christianity in the Sistine Chapel consists in sending everything to the devil with a gesture of unpardoning severity. He swept all the world away at once;—Giottos and Angelicos, Christian saints and Papal chamberlains—all huddled together, saved and damned, and I'd nothing to do but go with the crowd; so I come to Florence solely to look once more at the Medici figures. I sat a long time yesterday before them, trying to worry their thought out of them, and I came away quite extatic and depressed and self-contented and desperate. I cannot quite fix their relative order. First comes Guiliano, no doubt, the young man, rather sad but hopeful and handsome, ready for life. Then I want to place the so-called Dusk, the soul of man laying out his work, looking it square in the face, practical, ready to back his judgment with money or sword or speech. Then the so-called Dawn, the waking up to what one has undertaken, the painful discovery that life is going to be hard; the farewell to Early Christianism, Giottos, Angelicos, Virgin mothers and Greek Gods; the knowledge that the Christ-child, if he comes at all, comes to be crucified. Then the broad glare of day, fierce, terrific; a mere formless effort, impossible to complete, useless to define, furious to think about; a mere, blind, brute endurance, without aim or hope or understanding; a primal energy, not even bound or aspiring, as in the Slave at Paris. At the end, not the exquisite exhaustion and beatitude of the Slaves, but only Sleep and not easy sleep at that, for the attitude is that of momentary rest, and the mask is always below. Then, above all, resuming it all, comes Lorenzo, pondering over it, but not seeing either Hope or Consolation or Faith; only his

finger on his lip, saying to me as clearly as though he spoke:—You know it all! You and Michael and I, and poor, sad Guiliano, poor devil, are all in it! But we don't talk about it. What's the use!

"The contrast in handling the same subject between these figures and the Slaves is highly amusing. Of course the Slaves are more beautiful. The struggle and the apparently happy extinction, are more to our fancy. But what a mad old maniac Michael was, and how did he dare practice on human stupidity to such an extent as to put up these symbols of brutality and despair over princes' tombs in a Christian Church? They say Guiliano was weary of life. If he was aware of Michael's intentions about his tomb, I am sure life would have amused him enormously. . . ."

The access of stature which we feel, or ought to feel, in this letter, we may take as one of the final stations in Adams' growth into—or discovery of—the imaginative pattern for which his sixty one years of life had slowly prepared him. After Michael Angelo and St. Francis, Adams "returned to Paris with a broken and a contrite spirit, prepared to admit that his life had no meaning, and conscious that in any case it no longer mattered. . . . Here at last he entered into the practice of his final profession": the composition of his two vital images, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, and *The Education of Henry Adams*.

[The letters to Louisa Hooper are printed for the first time with the kind permission of Mrs. Ward Thoron and Mr. Charles Francis Adams.]

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[1] *Letters of Henry Adams* 1892-1918, p. 149.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 152
[3] *Ibid.* p. 161
[4] *Ibid.* p. 162
[5] *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918 edition), pp. 360-61
[6] *Ibid.* p. 92
[7] *Ibid.* pp. 387-88
[8] *Life of George Cabot Lodge*, p. 89
[9] *Education*, pp. 368-69

Holiday in Reality

by Wallace Stevens

I

It was something to see that their white was different,
Sharp as white paint in the January sun;

Something to feel that they needed another yellow,
Less Aix than Stockholm, hardly a yellow at all,

A vibrancy not to be taken for granted, from
A sun in an almost colorless, cold heaven.

They had known that there was not even a common speech,
Palabra of a common man who did not exist.

Why should they not know they had everything of their own,
As each had a particular woman and her touch?

After all, they knew that to be real each had
To find for himself his earth, his sky, his sea

And the words for them and the colors that they possessed.
It was impossible to breathe at Durand-Ruel's.

II

The flowering Judas grows from the belly or not at all.
The breast is covered with violets. It is a green leaf.

Spring is umbilical or else it is not spring.
Spring is the truth of spring or nothing, a waste, a fake.

These trees and their argentines, their dark-spiced branches,
Grow out of the spirit or they are fantastic dust.

The bud of the apple is desire, the down-falling gold,
The catbird's gobble in the morning half-awake—

These are real only if I make them so. Whistle
For me, grow green for me and, as you whistle and
grow green,

Intangible arrows quiver and stick in the skin
And I taste at the root of the tongue the unreal of what
is real.

Phoenices

by Herbert Cahoon

SCENE: *A large sunny room, romantically decorated with flags and valentines.* MISS MINNA, *a housekeeper, is dusting a grandfather's clock.*

Miss Minna: Today a long tune sung
To pluck the sunken heart
Is itching in me
While my knuckles crack.
Watching the clock
To keep time with the curtains
And brush off the sun
As he fades the Britannicas.
Tea sets just before the sun
The mirabilis of the leaves

At a gritty six.
Oh for a twirling good hug
And a carpet as soft as a couch.
Me! Me! And the sun on all sides.

COLONEL TROUT *enters in hunting costume carrying a brace of ducks. He throws the ducks in the fireplace, sits in a chair, and lights his pipe.*

Miss Minna: The day was, I take it, Colonel,
No day for boats. Pardon me,
I do speak like an executive
Or even an administrator.
I'll call Madame Trout for tea. (*exit*)

Colonel: The ducks lie bleeding on the grate;
Blood flows at a jolt. Strange birds,
Whatever tone you may assume.
I'll have the girl clean up the mess.
Shot flew at a blow,
Like the wasp from his pithy nest.
The boat rocked and the cove echoed,
And the reeds were brown
With the smell of powder.
They came to the earth
All matter of fact and dead.
The first blood came
On the threshold of my house
When their bones were nearly cold.
(*Miss Minna enters*)
The ducks are unconcerned how
Steadily and sparkling thick
Their blood must flow.
Come Minna and scoop them away!

(*Miss Minna has been examining the bleeding ducks cautiously.*)

Miss Minna: It's the ashes they want to bleed on.
(*She laughs*)
Eggs, and a hundred years, etc.

Colonel: Ha! Minna! Reading of propagation.

Enough! I have not shot a Phoenix.

Miss Minna runs out of the room. The Colonel mounts a ladder to the top of a bookcase, brushing the flags out of his way, and sits there reading a small volume. MRS. TROUT *enters, with a girl behind her bearing a tea tray. The girl puts the tray on the table and begins to clean up the ducks. Mrs. Trout stands at the bottom of the ladder to talk to her husband.*

Mrs. Trout: Look alive, boy!
Come down out of the flags!
(*The Colonel descends*)
What a limpid picture
With the sun everywhere
And you, with your boots unlaced.
Put your gun in the rack.
Last night I found
A moose-call in my bed.

(*She sees the blood, which by this time has flowed throughout the fireplace.*)

Is that you?

Colonel: I tried to find out
Why they bleed so evenly
But the book fell short.

(*The girl wipes the bricks with a damp cloth, but does not touch the ducks.*)

Mrs. Trout: What did it say?

Colonel: Man is a symbol of everything
All forms are a symbol of man.
I am most frightened by the fact
That all action is relative.

(*Miss Minna has been looking out of the window.*)

Miss Minna: The flag on the pole
Refuses to wave!
While the wind slaps the rope
I am afraid of the dead silk.

Colonel: Perhaps we should call
The itinerant gardener.

Mrs. Trout: Open all the windows, Minna!
Let in the wind.
(*They open the windows and the wind blows through the room.*)
See it come curling over the ledge
Like smoke, and striking a fancy,
It searches its complement—
Rumpling and pulling to go
Like an arrow gathering strength
Around the ceiling.
Shake the Stag at Bay!
Rattle the wax roses!
On your way to the wind again!
Miss Minna: Look at the flags—the flags!
Not a thread moves as the wind
Rushes through them.
And how the valentines quiver!
Colonel: The blood of the ducks
Is running to the carpet.
Mrs. Trout: Light the grate!
(*No one moves and she lights it herself. The room is filled with the smell of burning duck. They stand and watch as the ducks are consumed. The flags begin to wave slowly, like a great engine beginning to perform.*)
Miss Minna: God be praised!
It's a Phoenix after all!
Soon I'll get my knock at the door.
(*The flags wave furiously, and the room is filled with the sound of quacking ducks.*)
Colonel: All action is relative.

CURTAIN

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

—

Five Prose Poems

FROM

ILLUMINATIONS

[1872 - 1873]

[Translated by Louise Varèse]

AFTER THE DELUGE

As soon as the idea of the Deluge had settled,

A hare stopped in the clover and swaying flower-bells and said a prayer to the rainbow, through the spider's web.

Oh, the precious stones that were hiding and the flowers that already looked around.

In the dirty main street, stalls were set up and boats hauled toward the sea, high-tiered as in old prints.

Blood flowed at Blue-Beard's, in circuses, through slaughter houses, and windows were blanched by God's seal. Blood and milk flowed.

Beavers built. "*Mazagrans*" steamed in coffee-houses.

In the big house with window panes still dripping, children in mourning looked at the marvelous pictures.

A door slammed, and in the village square the little boy waved his arms, understood by weather-vanes and cocks on steeples everywhere, in the bursting shower.

Madame . . . set up a piano in the Alps. Mass and first communions were celebrated at the hundred thousand altars of the cathedral.

Caravans started. And the Splendid Hotel was built in the chaos of glaciers and the polar night.

After that the moon heard jackals puling across the deserts of thyme, and eclogues in wooden shoes growling in the orchard.

Then, in the violet and budding forest, Eucharis told me it was Spring.

Gush, pond;—froth, roll on the bridge and pour over the woods; black palls and organs, lightnings and thunder, rise and roll; waters and sorrows, rise and launch the floods again.

For since they have been dissipated—oh the precious stones being buried and the opened flowers! —what a weariness! And the Queen, the Witch who lights her embers in the earthen pot, will never tell us what she knows, the thing we do not know.

DAWN

I embraced thé summer dawn.

Nothing yet stirred along the palace fronts. The water was dead. The shadows still camped in the woodland road. I walked, waking quick, warm breaths; and gems looked on, and wings rose without a sound.

The first venture was, in a path already filled with fresh, pale glints, a flower who told me her name.

I laughed at the waterfall that towsled through the pines: on the silver summit I recognized the goddess.

Then, one by one, I lifted up her veils. In the lane, waving my arms. Across the plain, where I denounced her to the cock. To the city she fled, among the steeples and the domes; running like a beggar on the marble quais, I chased her.

Far up the road near a laurel wood, I wrapped her round with her gathered veils, and I felt faintly her immense form. Dawn and the child fell down at the bottom of the wood.

Waking, it was noon.

LIVES

I

O the enormous avenues of the holy land, the temple terraces! What has become of the brahmin who explained the proverbs to me? Of that time, of that place, I can still see even the

old women! I remember silver hours and sunlight by the rivers, the hand of the girl on my shoulder, and our caresses standing in the spicy plains. —A flight of pigeons thunders round my memory. An exile here, I once had a stage on which to play all the masterpieces of literature. I would show you unheard-of riches. I examine the history of the treasures that you found. I can see the sequel. My wisdom is as scorned as chaos. What is my nothingness to the stupefaction that awaits you?

II

I am an inventor more deserving by far than all those who have preceded me; a musician, moreover, who has discovered something like the key of love. At present, a country gentleman of a lean land with a sober sky, I try to arouse myself with the memory of my beggar childhood, my apprenticeship or my arrival in wooden shoes, of polemics, of five or six widowings, and of certain convivialities when my level head kept me from rising to the diapason of my comrades. I do not regret my old portion of divine gaiety: the sober air of this acrid country feeds vigorously my atrocious scepticism. But since this scepticism can not henceforth be put to use, and since, moreover, I am consecrated to a new anxiety,—I expect to become a very dangerous madman!

III

In a loft where I was locked when I was twelve I got to know the world, I illustrated the human comedy. In a wine cellar I learned history. In a northern city, at some nocturnal celebration, I met all the women of the old masters. In an old arcade of Paris I was taught the classical sciences. In a magnificent dwelling encircled by the entire Orient, I accomplished my prodigious work and spent my illustrious retreat. I have churned my blood. My duty has been remitted. One must no longer even dream of that. I am really from beyond the tomb, and no commissions.

VAGABONDS

Pitiful brother! what atrocious vigils I owed him! "I have not seized ardently upon this enterprise. I have mocked at his infirmity. My fault should we go back into exile, into slavery." He thought me ill-starred and of a very strange innocence, and would add disquieting reasons.

For reply I would sneer at this Satanic doctor and in the end, going to the window I would create beyond the countryside crossed by bands of rare music, phantoms of nocturnal luxury to come.

After this vaguely hygienic diversion, I would lie down on my pallet. And almost every night, no sooner asleep than the poor brother would rise, his mouth rotten, eyes starting from his head, —just as he had dreamed he looked!—and would pull me out into the room, howling his dream of imbecilic sorrow.

I had, in truth, taken upon myself in all sincerity, the task of returning him to his primitive state of child of the Sun, —and, nourished by the wine of caverns and the biscuit of the road, we wandered, I impatient to find the place and the formula!

BOTTOM

Reality being too thorny for my great personality, —I found myself, nevertheless, at my lady's, an enormous grey-blue bird, soaring toward the cornices of the ceiling and trailing my wings through the shadows of the evening.

I was at the foot of the canopy supporting her adored gems and her physical masterpieces, a great bear with violet gums, fur hoary with sorrow, eyes on the silver and crystal of the consoles.

Everything became shadow and ardent aquarium.

In the morning, —battling dawn of June,—a donkey, I rushed into the fields, braying and brandishing my grievances, until the Sabine women of the suburbs came and threw themselves at my breast.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

—

The Deserts of Love

(FRAGMENTS)

1871

[Translated by Louise Varèse]

FOREWORD

These are the writings of a young, a very young man, who has grown up anywhere; without mother, without country, indifferent to everything that other people know, fleeing all moral courage, like so many other pitiful young men before him. But he, so full of anxiety and so troubled—he did nothing but set his course toward death as toward a terrible and fatal decency. Not having loved women,—full-blooded though he was!—his soul and his heart, all his force, were taken up with aberrations, strange and sad. The following dreams—his loves!—came to him in his beds and in the streets, and from their sequence and from their ending, sweet religious considerations may arise. Will one recall the continuous sleep of legendary Mohammedans—brave though and circumcized! But this fantastic suffering possessing a disturbing sovereignty, it is sincerely to be hoped that this Soul, among us lost, and who desires death, it seems, should meet at that instant authentic consolations, and be worthy.

I

This time, it is the Woman whom I saw in the City, and to whom I spoke and who spoke to me.

I was in a room without light. They came to tell me she was there: and I saw her in my bed, all mine, without light! I was much troubled, and largely because it was in my parents' house,

so anguish filled me! I was in rags, while she, a woman of fashion, gave herself to me: A nameless anguish: I seized her and, almost naked, let her fall from the bed; and in my unutterable weakness, I fell upon her and rolled with her on the rugs, without light! The family lamp reddened one by one the adjoining rooms. Then, the woman disappeared. I shed more tears than God could ever have required.

I went out into the city without end. O weariness! Drowned in the insensible night and in the flight of happiness. It was like a winter night with a fall of snow to smother the world forever. The friends to whom I cried: where is she, falsely replied. I was there in front of the windows where she goes every evening. I was running through an underground garden. They pushed me away. At all this I wept abundantly. Finally, I went down into a place full of dust and sitting on some lumber, I drained my body of all its tears that night. —And yet always my exhaustion returned.

I understood that She belonged to her everyday life; and that it would take longer for the turn of kindness to come again than for the reproduction of a star. She has not returned and will never return, the Adorable One, who visited me in my home, — something I should never have presumed to ask. True, this time, I wept more than all the children in the world.

II

It is certainly the same countryside. The same rustic house of my parents, even the same room, where the over-doors are faded sheep-folds with lions and coats-of-arms. At dinner, there is a room with candles and wine and ancient panelling. The dining table is very large. The servants! There were several as far as I can remember. —One of my young friends of old was there, a priest and dressed as a priest; at present: for the sake of greater freedom. I remember his purple room with yellow paper panes; and his hidden books that had been soaked in the sea!

As for me, I was abandoned in that country house without end;

reading in the kitchen, drying the mud of my clothes in front of the guests with their drawing-room conversation; mortally troubled by the murmur of the milk of morning and the night of the last century.

I was in a dark room: what was I doing? A servant-girl came up to me: a little puppy I should say: notwithstanding, she was beautiful, noble and maternal beyond words to me: pure, familiar, altogether charming. She pinched my arm.

I can no longer remember her face clearly: much less her arm whose flesh I rolled between my fingers; nor her mouth which mine seized like a little wave endlessly lapping. I flung her onto a basket of cushions and sail-cloth in a dark corner. And I remember nothing but her white drawers trimmed with lace.

Then, O despair! The wall grew dimly the shadow of trees, and I was plunged into the amorous sadness of the night.

Fair Day

by John Maher Murphy

Pieman to Simple Simon: Simon, show
Me first your penny. Pieman, Simon sighed,
Indeed I haven't any, high. But low

And soon and simply two will ride astride
Each eye of mine and I, man Simon, spent
By time and in a till where I'll abide

With savor for no flavor, and no bent
For ware at any fair of any pieman,
Nor flair for caring where that sly man went.

I'm sorry, simple simple shy man, I, man
Must see those pennies plain before I share
My rare and secret sweetness, said the Pieman.

It is not my affair, not my affair,
That you will have no taste then for my ware.

The Portable Forge

by Alex Comfort

It was in the winter, the early winter of 1919: I was living with my uncle's people, having been sent there when the fighting began. Our house was on a hillside, you understand, or rather in it, because the slope was hollow, and the top of the house projected out of the curve of the ground like a bird's breastbone, the ends of it bearded almost always with nets. When it was under snow the slope was like the back of a white rabbit, but out of it stuck the roof of my uncle's house. I had not been long enough there to know anything about local affairs. I spent my time, as boys will, between the long boat-shaped bunkhouse which housed my uncle's shepherds, with three patches of thawed snow on its keel for the three stoves, and the place where the hillside ran into reed-beds, and the snow became slushy. Beyond that there was open water, full of ranks of thin brown stems, like the hairs on a broom, and some low islands covered with the bushes and the snow lying on them in a cake, like froth on a pool, held up on the twig tops, with tunnels and holes under it that the animals made—it was a mild winter, very early but mild, and all the time the creek remained open.

I had been there three weeks only, if I remember it rightly, because I had not seen the fields or the top of the hill—the clouds came down into the birches above the house. There were horse tracks and footmarks going everywhere, but always into the snow haze, and if one walked sideways from the house onto the face of the hill, one could lose sight of everything black, and see the

mist and the ground of the same colour, and the line of prints leading up to one's own feet—nothing else. I think, too, that it was on that morning the haze lifted and I saw the peak with its cracks and horns smoking like the bow of a ship, and never having known that it was above us, I was more scared to find it there than ever I had been at the street fighting. The lines and scars ran down into the far part of the brown water, which was as flat as glass that morning, with the fields of reeds floating about like smokes of different colours. The mist fell again later, level with the telegraph poles on the Government road, but at midday there was a rumbling in the ground that shook everything, and long brown waves came past the foot of the hill, spreading out through the reedbeds. The shepherds all piled out to watch the waves and discuss the origin of the avalanche, and into which valley it had gone. They talked a great deal about somebody, Kallinikov, who had better look out for himself, for one reason and another, and I remembered I had never heard the name, or seen it in my uncle's letters, so that I asked him who Kallinikov was.

They would not tell me about him, and I was afraid to ask the shepherds, because, absurd as it may seem, I was afraid of their wool hats. Walking in the mist they appeared horribly tall, like unpleasant flat-headed birds—in any case, I did not ask them, but I sat up on one of the stoves listening, and trying to find out who Kallinikov might be, and why he had to be careful. I heard a great deal sitting on that stove, especially of the things which my uncle had a preposterous aversion to telling me—he felt that hearing about the fighting was not so much worse than what I had come here to escape, living in a school barrack with snipers hidden on the roof, in Odessa. He was wrong not to have told me, mind you—I tell my own son everything, it's ridiculous to be superior to children, especially boys, if they've a mind to know—but in any case, all I could learn was that Kallinikov had done something that nobody here liked, and that it was to do with horses.

I had seen the horses, a herd of them, mostly grey, moving like ghosts beyond the creek, their feet in the reedbeds not

seeming to touch the snow. I do not know why they were out in that weather, or if they were out of my own imagination, but I believed that those must be the cause of the trouble—grey ponies, I knew that much, and sold at a profit to somebody. I piped up from the stove to ask the fat harness mender, but his mouth was packed with little brass tacks, and he tried to make as if he did not hear me. The whole bunch of them, even Vassilly who was my best friend there later, used to think I was spying for my uncle, and shut up like oysters. When I asked again, Vassilly threw his wet hat at me and knocked me off the top of the stove.

"You ask your uncle who Kallinikov is—Tryfon Ilyitch Kallinikov, horse breeder—we don't know."

"They were over at the far ford a week back" said one of the shepherds, who was whittling a piece of stick with his knife and making the chips fly.

"Grey horses and White money" said someone else. "If my brother gets behind him, he'll need to look out for himself."

I could not follow it all at the time, but the more I listened the more I realised that Kallinikov had sold horses to someone he ought not, and that someone else was likely to punish him for it, and further that my uncle was worried about the whole affair, and especially anxious not to be on either side in it. There had been fighting no further off than the small post town at the foot of the mountain. It did not worry me at all then, and I found it, and even the big yellow hole there had been in the school wall, far less alarming than the hats coming at me out of the mist.

There was not much light in the shepherd's bunk—one oil lamp, and what came out of the stoves. The snow on the wood by each stove had melted, and there was a pool on the floor. They'd been out with poles looking for blowholes now that the snow had stopped, and a fat sheep with its four paws tied together was lying in a pool of water beside one of the stoves, its head going up and down as it puffed, enjoying the heat after what it had been through—Vassilly put his boot on it to light his pipe much as if it were a cushion, but it didn't roll. They had fetched their own food in tins and were eating it on the seats round the sides

of the hut, and I was waiting to be called by the tin bugle to get my own. It was then that the boy—older than I: I'd never spoken to him,— came in and spoke again about Kallinikov. Vassilly said—"He's had fair warning."

The bugle went then, and I couldn't stop.

But at twelve I'd no sense to know when to keep my mouth shut, and I had to come out at table with "Why's Kallinikov had fair warning?" I thought it was a trump card to make them tell me what Kallinikov had done. But my uncle did not even ask me who had said it. He said "I suppose I ought to warn him."

"You'll keep out" said my aunt. "We shall have them here."

"My men would vouch for me."

"Not for an informer. Kallinikov made his own bed. He's the other side of the creek." My aunt crossed herself thoroughly, and for the rest of the meal they ignored me. God knows, they'd one son on each side, if I'd had the sense to realise it, but it was all a sort of game as far as I was concerned.

"He's got my forge" said my uncle, half-way through the meal. "I must go over and get it—I shan't get another sent out."

"You won't go, Alyosha, if I lock you in" shouted my aunt.

"But it has a fan on it, better than a bellows—if it gets broken there'll be no harness at all. Even Vassilly—"

"Can heat up the buckles in the kitchen stove."

I knew the forge well enough. It stood on three legs in the far corner of the yard. The fan was worked by a chain like a cycle chain, and it clicked loudly whenever the handle moved. It had been made in Odessa, sent miles by train, and brought to the farm on the back of a horse. My uncle had been unreasonably proud of it because it was the only forge of its kind in that part of Russia, and I remember being told that he had shown it to everyone. Soon after it arrived, by the way, my uncle had caught Vassilly using a pair of Tatar bellows he'd got from somewhere, and forging up a buckle in a pile of charcoal on the doorstep, and my uncle had broken the bellows and kicked Vassilly up the bottom with his boots, and made a speech about progress—my uncle was a queer fellow. Vassilly went on using another

pair of bellows on the quiet, and the forge stood in the corner.

I could hear my uncle and aunt talking through the door in the next room, their voices grumbling, but I could not hear what was said, and did not like to go back to the shepherds to ask. I went to sleep against the warm wall, which backed onto the stove, and had forgotten all about Kallinikov until I heard riders going past, and remembered the horses, but they went on towards the ford over the creek. Then, it must have been a good deal later on, many people arrived walking, boots going squeak, squeak, in the snow. They banged on the door of the bunkhouse, and the door opened. I could hear names being called out, and some metallic things that were not money being shaken out of a bag. The door banged and steps went away.

Later still, I woke to hear my uncle walking about. The snow outside the window was crossed by two wide paths of yellow light, one from the door of the bunkhouse, one from the door of the farm. My uncle was standing in the snow outside. I could see into the bunkhouse. It was empty. Then beyond the patches of light, the snow was pink like sugar, but the pinkness came and went. There was a fire burning somewhere. My uncle was out of sight but I could see his shadow and somehow recognise it. Then squeak, squeak, went the boots. Four of our shepherds came in, walking up the track of the light. They were all men I knew. The first was wrapped in some sort of garment I had never seen before. When he came closer I could see it was a curtain, made of green cloth with gilt eagles on it. The second had a long gun, one that ordinarily hung up on the side of the chimney in the bunkhouse. The last two were wrapped in their coats. Somebody shouted to my uncle—

"Alexei Petrovitch, go and get your forge."

"I won't have anything to do with this. On your heads be it" my uncle shouted. "The saints will punish it."

"Come in, come in" shouted my aunt.

The four shepherds stopped at the door. "The saints will punish it," my uncle was saying—"I know you all, every one of you, and I know that you had no reason."

"We had reason" said the shepherd with the curtain.

"But not to steal" said my uncle.

"Go and get your forge, Alyosha."

"You're not to go" said my aunt.

"I hereby declare I had nothing to do with this business whatever. Kallinikov was my neighbour—I don't defend his dealings, but honest men have no reason—"

"He had a fair trial" said several men who were out of sight. The shepherds marched into the bunkhouse. The door shut. One of the paths of light disappeared. "Go and get your forge, Alexei Petrovitch, and shut up" said a voice in the dark. Squeak, squeak, went the boots.

"Vassilly, come and help me to carry it."

Nobody answered him.

My aunt went on calling to him, forbidding him to go. He shouted that he was going to get the forge. He was as obstinate as sin.

"There's nobody to help you carry it."

"The boy will help me carry it."

"You can't take him there."

"I can take him where I please. Gregor, get dressed and come out."

I was half dressed already by then.

I followed him under the hurdles and down the side of the hill. The fire was beyond the creek, but there was a wind towards us, and smoke came down and blew through the reeds so that one could not tell which was smoke and which reedbed. The night was light enough, and the water as well as the snow was full of the pinkness from the unseen fire.

Presently we were at the beginning of the lowest slope of the hill. My uncle was going in long strides and each print he left filled up with shadow like ink in an inkwell. We came among some scattered birches, like people, standing singly or in small groups. Sparks were sailing up slowly over the hillside opposite like big stars. The boat, with a high triangular nose, was bobbing about in the water, with bundles of rushes tied along its

sides, as in all the boats throughout that part of the country. We got into it without speaking.

Going through the reedbeds we began to send up innumerable birds. They flew in and out of the smoke, and hearing them cry at night, as water birds never cry, I thought I could hear people speaking or laughing. Also I began to be able to smell burning, heavy, like the smoke of a wet wood fire. The birds were beating all round us. The reeds, when we came near them, threw shadows like hair. The mountain was in sight, at the head of the creek, its top cut off by a sharp level of cloud.

I have never since crossed water at night. There was thin ice among the reed stems which cracked, and the cold hard stems brushed my hand when I put it on the gunwale. In the hollow of the far hill, patches of the snow had begun to thaw. My uncle tied the boat to a root, and I followed him towards the fire. It was not far away, and already I could hear it, rushing quietly, rather as water than as fire. The top of the hill was covered with a little wood of black pine, and we went into it, going over pine needles which were sheltered by the trees and free of snow, but lumps of it kept falling heavily, so that the whole wood was full of thumps and swishes and the rattle of crystals falling.

When we were over the brow of the hill—I suppose we had come a couple of miles—the glow was much clearer. One could see individual flames, and sparks fell into the roof of snow and hissed. At the edge of the wood we stopped.

There was a house, built of bricks in three stories, in the middle of a square of wooden buildings and hurdles. It stood surrounded by a pool of red-coloured snow, and it burned steadily, all the windows glowing and their frames smoking, and out of a hole in the roofing shingles sparks shot up in sheaves, one after another like wasps out of a nest. The fire was almost noiseless. The hurdles and a water-tank on legs were standing against the glow and throwing long shadows that jumped. All the smaller out-houses were spouting fire of different colours, like little volcanoes round a bigger peak. The fire had melted the snow off two of the big chestnut trees behind the house. Nobody was to be

seen at all, but prints ran every way, each one containing a spoonful of shadow—men's prints, horse prints, places where there had been a sack dragged along. A table with carved legs stood by itself in the snow, the top of it shining.

"Gregor, you stay there, and pray" said my uncle, looking out of the wood and all round him. Then he set off running towards the fire. All the way he ran, he shouted at the top of his voice, "Neighbors, it's I—Alexei Petrovitch. I'm coming, I'm coming."

Nothing answered him—there was only the sound of the fire, blazing away quietly with a noise like a waterfall, never loud, but full of little pistol-shots.

I did not pray—I could see my uncle running from one of the burning outhouses to another, opening doors, looking in. At one place a horrible screaming began, but it did not frighten me—I knew it was the noise of a horse—and when he opened the door it rushed out, its tail already smoking, and past him over the snow to the other edge of the wood.

There were prints, as I said, going all ways. Not far off, outside the wood, was a big holly, tall as an apple tree, with a roof of snow to it and under that green leaves; altogether it was the shape of a fat man with a cloak and no head who'd been standing in the snow. I could see that a good many of the prints ran to it, and under the tent of it there were two things which I took to be stumps, but when the fire burned up, I could see that they were chairs—good, city chairs, not peasants' chairs—lying on their sides in the snow. They should never have been lying there. I was too much asleep still to be frightened, and like a little fool I felt I had to go and stand them up again, as they ought to be—the tree was not twenty yards off. I slipped out of the wood, found the snow deeper than I thought, and almost fell. A lot of the snow had been shaken down from the roof of the tree, also, as if someone had been climbing it.

I reached the tent of the tree and went in. Snow fell down my collar as I pushed through the hanging part of it, full of spiky dark leaves as big as medals, to get to the chairs.

Then I struck my face quite suddenly on fur, which was part

of the top of a thigh boot. Hanging in the tent of the tree, like large pale fruits, were a man and a young girl. The man wore only the boots, brown leather ones with brass studs and fur tops, and a white striped nightshirt. The girl seemed to be wrapped in a sheet. It needed only the push I gave them coming in to set them swinging, and more snow came down. I knew it was a girl because I could see the long hair.

I tell you I ran like the devil—my uncle was coming up the slope, clutching the forge to his chest and staggering in the snow, still shouting "Comrades, neighbours—don't shoot, it's Alexei Petrovitch getting his forge back." Neither of us stopped until we reached the boat. My aunt was still leaning out of the window when we got back. The door of the bunk was open, and I could see the faces of the shepherds inside, at the crack, watching us. Some of them laughed when they saw my uncle.

Next day, the bunks were as they had always been. The green curtain was stowed away. As far as I know, nobody bothered to enquire how Kallinikov's house came to catch fire. He and his mistress died of being burned, and all Kallinikov's horsemen were away, it happened, at a wake. He was a careless fellow—probably he was drunk and kicked over the lamp. I know that we burned most of the holly tree in the stoves of our bunkhouse. It was an unlucky tree. For a long time its glossy green logs were lying about behind the out-houses.

I. The Poetic Tradition of St.-John Perse

by Wallace Fowlie

Note: The Editors of THE CHIMERA announce that, with the article on St.-John Perse by Wallace Fowlie in this issue, they are starting a new series on important European writers who are less well known here than they deserve to be.

We believe that with the recent appearance of many good translations, and also because of the increased sense of our connections, cultural as well as social, with Europe, this will be a timely and valuable series.

I

IN 1930, when Mr. Eliot published his translation of *Anabase*, the name of the French poet, St.-John Perse, became known to the poetry reading world in England and America. The translator's preface in that edition is not a criticism of the poem, but it claims that *Anabase* is as important a piece of writing as the later work of James Joyce. Mr. Eliot is a praise-sparing critic, and when he does recommend a contemporary artist to our attention—I am thinking particularly of St.-John Perse and Djuna Barnes—it appears to us, who consider Mr. Eliot one of the best critics in the English language, a fairly sure nomination for immortality.

In 1942, a new poem of St.-John Perse, entitled *Exil*, appeared in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Here, the poem was printed in its original French text only, which is another kind of homage to the poet. The language of *Exil* is excessively difficult, even for the French, but its appearance in the Chicago *Poetry* was a literary event of distinction, and was followed in the same issue

by a valuable biographical and appreciative statement of Mr. Archibald MacLeish in whose Library of Congress M. Perse occupies an important position today.

And now in 1944, we have the good fortune to see published an American edition of St.-John Perse's first volume of poetry, *Eloges,* whose first Paris edition appeared in 1910. The French text of *Eloges* (and other poems) is faced by an admirably accurate English translation done by Mrs. Louise Varèse (New York: W. W. Norton). Two volumes and a long poem, then constitute the work of St.-John Perse: 1910, *Eloges;* 1924, *Anabase;* 1942, *Exil.* These publications separated by two long intervals, one of fourteen years and the other of eighteen years, are by a French poet who is today fifty-six years old and who has been acclaimed by other poets, especially by those outside his own country: by Mr. Eliot in England, by Hofmannsthal and Rilke in Germany, by Ungaretti in Italy.

M. St.-John Perse, whose real name is Alexis St. Léger Léger, is a colonial Frenchman who has been engaged in diplomatic service. Born in the West Indies in 1887 and educated in Paris, he has lived in China, in Paris in the service of Briand, and came to America in 1940 when he found himself unable to follow the policies of the Vichy government.

His career is reminiscent of Paul Claudel's, the other poet-diplomat of France. And his poetry also is in the Claudel tradition. What, briefly, is this tradition and what is its place in the general development of contemporary French poetry?

II

It becomes more and more clear that Baudelaire is the inexhaustible source of modern poetry. Three main kinds of verse seem to have their origin in *Les Fleurs du Mal.* The first of these, a delicate, sentimental, and strikingly musical form of poetry, best represented by Verlaine, was the first to disappear. The second kind, represented by Mallarmé, in which the symbol is rigorously guarded against any facile explanation, has been

continued by Paul Valéry. Like the Verlaine tradition, the Mallarmé-Valéry tradition has reached today some sort of impasse. It is the third kind of poetry to have its source in Baudelaire, which has known the richest development. In fact, the influence of Rimbaud, the chief exponent of this third poetic form, has been so abundant not only in France, but in England and America as well, that a thesis will surely one day be written on how Rimbaud founded, more than any other poet, the major school of twentieth century poetry.

Claudel owes much to Rimbaud, both spiritually and aesthetically. The surrealists, especially their best poets: Breton and Eluard, have acknowledged countless times their debt to *Les Illuminations* and *Une Saison en Enfer*. St.-John Perse, without being nominally a surrealist, belongs to their generation and employs many of their poetic practices. Behind his works, also, lie immediately the spiritual example and the artistic achievement of Rimbaud. The influence of Rimbaud is still apparent even in the best of the younger French poets: Patrice de la Tour du Pin. He is absent from perhaps only one of the twentieth century poets of France: Charles Péguy.

Both Rimbaud and Péguy were concerned with the religious problem and with what might be vaguely called the social problem. Yet their interest took different directions. Péguy found in the tradition and the spiritual vocation of France the great themes for his writing: Jeanne d'Arc, Corneille, his vinegrowing ancestors of Orléans, Chartres, and the contemporary Psichari and Bergson who were also rooted in the past. Rimbaud, who was an adolescent when he composed his literary work and therefore unable to sense any deep meaning in time and tradition, moved out of the present into the future, into the revolution of renewal, of intensity, of prophecy. Péguy stands for the purest vision and abstraction of the past. Rimbaud stands for the disordered vision of the present which is the necessary prelude to the purified significance of the future.

This is why the symbol of the voyage is so important for Rimbaud and for contemporary poets. The voyage symbol is the key

to St.-John Perse's poetry. *Eloges*, *Anabase*, and *Exil* are voyages, not literal in any geographical sense, but great caravan explorations of the soul, moments filled with the action of progress and conquest. More ornate and exotic than Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, the poetry of Perse fuses real and imagined geography as well as the time of antiquity and the time of the present. Like moving flowers constantly travelling ("Ce sont de grandes fleurs mouvantes en voyage," *Eloges*, p. 160), the separate pieces of the first volume are a more delicate and subdued orchestration of the themes of spiritual conquest and ardor in the two later works. The prose of Rimbaud, which is always a poetic utterance or a poetic ejaculation, is the form used by Claudel and Perse. Each line creates its own form as if the voyage, which is the quest for the reality of things—or what we might call the holiness of things—was a moving into the unknown and the untested. Without possessing the architecture of Dante's realms, the realms of St.-John Perse are the site of the modern soul's voyage. The realms of Dante narrate the epic of theology. The realms of Rimbaud and Perse narrate the poem of a spiritual quest which never defines itself.

III

In his first volume, *Eloges*, Perse's lines of prose are so disciplined and cadenced that they appear unmistakably as a form of poetry. They represent the perfect sentence which comes only as the culmination of a significant experience. A sentence identical with its thought and with the respiration required to speak it. The words of *Eloges* betray only themselves and never generate any false or foreign sentiment. It is the language of the things of the earth, of their salt, of ripe fruit and hard objects, of distant oceans and secret things in the ocean. Each word is virginal. Each picture of these *Eloges* is like a painting of Gauguin where a primitive and luxurious universe is recreated. This is not exactly the art of surrealism, because St.-John Perse is composing a more living and more personal work than that of the orthodox

surrealists. "Je reviendrai chaque saison avec un oiseau vert et bavard sur le poing." (*Eloges*, p. 134.) We think rather of Gide's *Nourritures Terrestres* which taught a whole generation of writers to consider the freshness of each object in the world and the uniqueness of each morning's experience.

But the art of *Eloges* needed some sort of convention to fuse its elements. It needed to submit itself to the convention of a theme or of a form, as the art of *Les Illuminations* needed the architecture of *Une Saison en Enfer* to realize itself. The convention finally accepted by Perse and used with such brilliance in *Anabase* is that of the epic. There are flashes of the epic quality throughout *Eloges*, and in *Anabase* it becomes permanent and determines the poetry. Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer* (1873), Apollinaire's *Chanson du Mal-Aimé* (1898-1913), Eliot's *Wasteland* (1922), and Perse's *Anabase* (1924) and *Exil* (1942) are spaced like great landmarks of the modern epic. They are voyages in the baudelairian sense where the goal is self-exploration and a quasi-mystical experience, and where the means employed to accomplish the voyage are a derangement of the senses according to Rimbaud's formula.

> Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté. (Baudelaire)
> Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens. (Rimbaud)

Poetry in the seventeenth century followed the rules of reason (Boileau), and in 1830 obeyed the laws of sentiment, and, after Rimbaud, has been pursuing the mission of disorientation. The modern epic hero is not comparable to Ulysses or Dante whose voyage was progress, attainment, home-coming. The modern epic hero is the artist who often loses the thread of his life and whose voyage-symbols ("Je vous parle, mon âme!—mon âme tout enténébrée d'un parfum de cheval!" *Anabase*, VII) are ways to self-knowledge.

During the romantic spell in literature, the exterior world was described dithyrambically both in its more modest and more exotic aspects. But the symbolist poets turned inwardly upon

themselves. Voyage became contemplation. Exoticism of landscape became exoticism of sensation. Song became psychic. Then, gradually, the modern poets learned Baudelaire's lesson that exterior nature is the source of symbols and a vast repertory of analogies. In the work of Claudel and Perse, the exterior world of the romantics and the inner world of the symbolists are fused. The exterior world exists, but its beauty and meaning are spiritual; its sources are deeply hidden in the spirit itself of man. Their song is of the world and of the spirit, and therefore endless as is any sentence which rises up from such depths as to be unintelligible.

Une seule et longue phrase sans césure à jamais inintelligible. (*Exil*)

What Baudelaire called "l'infaillibilité de la création poétique" stamps the work of Claudel and Perse. They are poets wandering along the confines of the world and of the cosmos, and whose words are like cries of men who have forgotten the meaning of the words they use, as they have forgotten their way through the universe and the object of their quest.

About The Contributors

☆ William Arrowsmith is now in the Army, studying Japanese at the University of Michigan. ☆ R. P. Blackmur teaches at Princeton. ☆ Herbert Cahoon is a reference librarian in New York. ☆ Alex Comfort, a young English writer, is just qualifying in medicine ☆ Dorothy Dudley is the author of *Dreiser and the Land of the Free*, and many articles and poems. ☆ Wallace Fowlie teaches French literature at Yale. A new book of his, *De Villon a Péguy*, will appear this summer in Montreal. ☆ John Maher Murphy has had poetry printed in a number of magazines. ☆ Wallace Stevens is the author of several well-known books of poetry. ☆ Louise Varese recently translated St.-John Perse's *Eloges*, which will appear this fall.

BOOK REVIEWS

ROBERT PENN WARREN: Selected Poems, 1923 - 1943. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50

Mr. Warren writes so little or publishes so little of what he writes that it is hardly surprising to find that this collection consists mostly of work published earlier in *Thirty-Six Poems* and *11 Poems on the Same Theme*. The selection, however, is graphical enough of the work of an eminent poet during two decades to call for some sort of re-estimation; especially since the development, with few exceptions, has been one of intrenchment into a personal style rather than experimentation with other modes. And, I think, that where he is most severely intrenched, he has done his best work.

I am faced, though, with the rather disquieting anomaly in Mr. Warren's poetry that his short poems usually have to compensate in excellence for his longer ones, that his best work is almost always his slightest, or shortest. *The Ballad of Billie Potts*, for instance, suffers, perhaps unduly, by comparison with *The Garden* or *Picnic Remembered*. The distinction is not so obvious as this, however, and rests primarily on the questionable assumption that the longer poems (there are only several) are experimental departures from a curve of habitual development and extension. *Bearded Oaks* and *Picnic Remembered* are perhaps experimental in their own way, for the texture is almost seventeenth-century, and *The Garden* might almost be a restatement of Marvell's masterpiece. Peculiar to these poems, and more particularly so to *Original Sin: A Short Story*, is, I think, a hall-mark of Mr. Warren, a kind of floating imagery, similar to that of Wallace Stevens in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*. The fundamental comparison is never stated, or, rather, the situation about which the imagery converges is never made clear, becoming palpable only in the tone and terms of the images. Thus, of the sense of nightmare and its concretions:

> Never met you in the lyric arsenical meadows
> When children call and your heart goes stone in the bosom;
> At the orchard anguish never, nor ovoid horror,
> Which is furred like a peach or avid like the delicious plum.

It takes no part in your classic prudence or fondled axiom. This is unlike Stevens' usage, and though expanded because more explicit, there is no dilution of the horror through over-precision. By a series of images, like the "furred peach" or the "avid plum" the strength is sustained though not defined. The category, however, is too imprecise to convey Warren's methods of progression, which vary sufficiently often that any categorising should be cautious. In *Picnic Remembered*, for instance, a Marvell-like conceit of submarine light and shadow (the amber light laved them, and us; / Or light then so tremulous, / So steady, that our substances, / Twin flies, were as in amber tamed / With our perfections stilled and framed . . . how darkness darker staired below . . .), which, fluidly constructed throughout six stanzas, is destroyed in the seventh by some rather trite phrasing about a hawk (Or is the soul a hawk that, fled /

On glimmering wings past vision's path, / Reflects the last gleam to us here. / Though sun is sunk and darkness near /—Uncharted Truth's high heliograph?).

In Mr. Warren's longest poem to date, *The Ballad of Billie Potts*, I was at first rather disappointed. There was a fairly extensive use of lines a little too reminiscent of Eliot's paradox and restatement (For they have been dipped in Time / And Time is only beginnings / Time is always and only beginnings / And is the redemption of our crime / And is our Saviour's priceless blood), but on continued rereadings, these resolve themselves so innocuously into the excellences that they can safely be ignored. The framework of the poem is a ballad in rhymed couplets, complemented by a chorus-like parenthetic commentary, necessitating, I suppose, a slightly oracular interpretation of the tale. This is perhaps unfortunate and perhaps responsible for occasional bombast, but the extraordinary technical excellence and heightened intensity of the commentary is more than compensatory for the faults. Of the ballad-folk:

> (Leaning and slow, you see them move
> In massive passion colder than any love:
> Their lips move but you do not hear the words
> Nor trodden twig nor fluted irony of birds . . .)

I think Mr. Warren, like most good poets, has *one* theme, which, given an opportunity, he will hammer home at any cost. That theme, if I remember the statement rightly, is *the tragic past* and the intention is the renewal of the tragic tradition. Whether this has been achieved or not, I do not feel prepared to say, but in the present collection I cannot find one poem which is without reference to his intention. Even the rather long satire, *Mexico is a Foreign Country: Five Studies in Naturalism*, might be defined as a minor variation. What can be predicated from this does not greatly matter; what is significant is that Warren, unlike Van Doren, for instance, has managed to integrate both his form and his theme to a point at which, if either vary, we should not recognize it. This discounts his facility but the level should not be embarrassing.

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

VVV No. 4

In these hours of passion in which we follow each move of our own flesh and blood on the Norman coast, it is salutary to know as intimately as we can from every present source the real and unique France, the France so skilful in investing matter with spirit, grief with gayety, never more indispensable than today. Since 1940 the enemy has diverted a stream of talent out of France into our midst—especially the artists and writers feared by the Nazi "new order." It is we who profit by their exile.

Among their several ventures, none is more expressively French than the magazine *VVV*, presided over by André Breton, the fourth issue of which appeared in February. Avowedly sectarian in character, an organ of surrealism, yet *VVV* projects a flavor of the France we used to relish: the elegance of tradition ever in the act of renewal through what is new and daring; hospitality toward the stranger whenever excellence recommends him. Here are Chilean, Cuban, Martinique, Irish, German, American, African, Eskimo, as well as French contributors.

It would be interesting to review from the vantage ground of all four numbers of *VVV*, but space confines us chiefly to the last and current issue. What first attracts is the physical aspect. The mere turning of the pages conveys an

air of fertility—a breeding place, it seems, of images verbal and plastic—the impression due in part to the knowing combination of color, paper and typography. Soon the reader-spectator must concede another virtue; one receives a sense of relative unison, like that enjoyed at a successful party. Here the guests, not always in agreement with each other, yet appear to assemble in the light of festivity. One is tempted to explore the secret of their cohesion, manifestly, in some parts, that of surrealism. How it is that after twenty-five years this approach to art still exercises seduction should moreover be worth exploring.

The appeal is the more remarkable in this country, in that over these years the adjective "surrealist" has entered into our vernacular and become a rather too facile cliché, denoting almost any eccentric display. (The "fallen" Salvador Dali, I suppose, may properly be held responsible with his excursions in show windows, World's Fairs and fashion magazines.) There is on the other hand in Negro music and in our show world a vital though childlike kinship with surrealist art. Undeniably no modern school of aesthetic thought has lived so long as an entity and as an active ferment—active in ever new and gifted members, as well as in artists who stem from its beginnings, like Max Ernst, Masson, Tanguy.

Today André Breton, alone among its formulators, is still occupied in refining the tenets of the surrealist creed: a work which seeks to constitute a new system of ethics, proposing as it does, a basis for action as well as for art. In an address to students of French at Yale University, December, 1942,* he has crystallized the essence of this philosophy in a treatise, closely linked, paradoxically enough, with the processes of logic and reason. He redefines his 1929 Manifesto indicating five points of his compass which we may only briefly paraphrase here:

(1). Starting from the concession to Freud that the exploration of the unconscious furnishes the only bases of valuable appreciation of the motives of human action, surrealism has never ceased to advance *automatism* as a method of expression and as first instance in a general revision of the modes of knowledge.

(2). We are led to the belief that there exists a point in the mind where life and death, the real and the imaginative, the past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the top and the bottom cease to be conceived contradictorily. . . . Surrealism will have been propitious in reducing these not insurmountable antagonisms—between madness and pretended reason, between the dream and action, the mental image and the physical perception—all of them products of disassociation from a unique faculty, still traceable in the child and primitive man. Its rediscovery, lifting the maledictory barrier between the interior and exterior world, would be the salvation of mankind.

(3). Among these contradictions the most ambitious to resolve is that which brings man and nature into conflict in the idea that the necessity of nature and the good of man are reconcilable, the two being gravely discordant. Surrealism has not solved this, but at least it has shown that the problem does not integrally resist under the attentive observation of coincidences and other phenomena of "chance." Chance remains the veil to be lifted.

(4). We who reached the age of twenty in the other war were faced with implacable realities. In order to endure them we were led to attach small importance to all things. We asked of our philosophers, our poets, the same sacrifice. At that time such proposals introduced a vindication of Alfred Jarry, and

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* Published in *VVV*, No. 2.

with him a sort of paradoxical laughter. The necessity of the genre, of this *humour dramatique*, has returned in full urgency today.

(5). In the attempt to coordinate these diverse approaches, surrealism has been brought to the threshold of the *self* as opposed to the *ego*—the *self*, "arena of the struggle between Eros and the instinct of death." Today on the return to a so-called normal existence, what will have to be swept with floodlights, and then resolutely cleansed, is that immense and sombre region of the *self*. . . . Surrealism alone has set foot there, taken bearings and placed distant watch towers.

How does the fourth issue of *VVV* measure up to this ambitious program? Do the artists assembled here make effective use of *automatism?* Do they bring the marvelous, often portended in the occult or in dreams, into a more fecund sphere of reality? Do they contribute to the knowledge of "chance," which for example plays so signal a part in the waging of war? Do they valuably explore the arena of *self* "where myths are born and wars fomented"? Or lighten the tragedy of living in the midst of death by what the French call *l'humour noir?* Finally, do they give that sense of liberty which Breton proclaims beautifully to be "the one word still to exalt me"?

Not that these contributors are all of them investors in the enterprise, but it is apparent that they have been selected as not unfavorable to it. If one considers No. 4 as the last statement of surrealism, the balance sheet, I would say, ends in the black. There are two poems, *Les Etats Généraux* by Breton, *Batouque* by Aimé Cesaire, and the partial reproduction of a painting, *The Jungle* by the Cuban Wilfredo Lam, which have a special rhythmic strength of structure as well as extreme beauty of separate images. These are reproductions of the first order.

Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Matta, repeat agreeably their now familiar gifts as divers beneath the stream of consciousness. They come to the surface here with ingenious pebbles of chance, myth, laughter, calculated to lighten the darkness of 1944. The verses of Mésens, if not grave satire, add piquancy; and Rollin's dirge casts a certain lyrical spell. The reproductions of cannibal designs and Eskimo masks and a 17th century detail of painting lend a related glamour to the assembly. Of the prose articles, that of Georges Duthuit in the form of a letter to Breton contributes the one new and provocative note. He turns a searching light on the arena of the surrealist *self* and asks questions, to be answered, one hopes, in the next issue.

Important too, since surrealism dedicates itself to youth and to beginners, are certain evocations, among which those of Philip Lamantia, Jacqueline Lamba, Isabelle Waldberg, Charles Duits are distinguished. Of these Duits is the most obedient product of the surrealist method. He follows the recipe to the point of never questioning the surcharge or relevance of the images that have invaded him. Yet his one-act play *Clitonne* preserves its nervous line, and is in fact a little triumph of the conscious over the unconscious imagination.

Almost through this one dutiful surrealist we are confronted with the assets and liabilities of the code. Liberation? Yes, and if the artist of today is not asked to return to the sterile rocks of positivism, it is in large part due to writers like Breton. They have doctrinized from the great rebels against 19th century reason and morality—Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and even before them, Poe and Coleridge; and have been nourished by the fruits of their own generation—the poems of Apollinaire, the canvases of Matisse and Picasso. To-

day the swamps and thickets, as well as some forbidden gardens of the human spirit, are open regions to the artist. Discipline? Of a kind. An intensity perhaps greater than that given to the pursuit of prescribed forms is required to match each new recovery of subconscious life with its replica in speech or in paint. Among the surrealists the absence of adorning rhyme and metre is compensated by an intricate vocabulary and by recondite, mythical reference. . . . Audacity? Yes, sometimes producing a shock that acrobats and magicians can give.

Yet the liberation is in some way out of step with liberty; the discipline too often lacks the spark of compulsion, as imposed in moments of crisis; the audacity falls short of fearlessness. It is in fact where the surrealist violates the precepts of his faith that he becomes most free, articulate, adventurous. I submit two passages from *Les Etats Gènéraux* which seem to owe enormously to the superconscious Breton.

"Il suffisait que le peuple se conçût en tant que tout et le devînt
Pour qu'il s'élève au sens de la dépendance universelle dans l'harmonie
Et que la variation par toute la terre des couleurs de peau et des traits
L'avertisse que le secret de son pouvoir
Est dans le libre appel au génie autochtone de chacune des races
En se tournant d'abord vers la race noire la race rouge
Parce qu'elles ont été longtemps les plus offensées"

* * *

"Le jour si c'était lui
Quand passe sur les campagnes l'heure de traire
Descendrait-il précipitamment ses degrés
Pour s'humilier devant la verticale d'étincelles
Qui saute de doigts en doigts entre les jeunes femmes des fermes
toujours sorcières"

This command to society and the precise magic of the pastoral image belong in the upper realms of consciousness. Nonetheless over the members of the poem as over those of Césaire's *Batouque* there is stretched a kind of veil—the dictated veil of dreams. To use another biological figure this aesthetic seems to recommend the woman's part. The poet is invaded, ravished, raped, but his doctrine refuses him the chance to construct, act, penetrate. There are moments too in this display when one is burdened by the anxiety of the artist—"Am I too conscious, am I subconscious enough?"—the self afraid to be caught in the brilliant world of volition and falling back among the mysteries.

Duthuit in his letter to Breton points to the fallacy involved here: "The fish glides above the waters of the unconscious; it fascinates us, but captured it loses its gleam. For these images, which cross over from sleep and madness, to live among us and be fertile, we have to give them everything, bones, blood, heart and thought." This, he suggests, is what the surrealist poet or painter does, at his best, when sensitized but not constrained by his creed.

One wonders if, following the tenet of *chance*, the road which these artists have chosen might not one day bring them, just by chance, to quite another highway.

DOROTHY DUDLEY